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The Staff Newsletter of the Ministry of Community and Social Services



Photo: Brian Pickell

EASED — Jane Byers and Laurie McEvoy are the permanent staff on the Employment Accommodation Service for Employees with Disabilities (EASED) team. The telephone number (displayed with a print-enlargement device used by people with low vision) is the customer service line for EASED. See the stories about EASED and Workplace Accommodation and Safety Services on page 2.

United Way campaigns begin



In communities all over Ontario, September is the month when United Way campaigns begin in earnest.

The Ontario Public Service is known as one of the biggest contributors to the United Way and almost every year we exceed our campaign goals. MCSS in particular is known for the generosity of its employees.

"Our staff, more than most people, are acutely aware of the demand for services among social-service agencies, and I think that's why our staff tend to respond generously," says Deputy Minister Rosemary Proctor. "I'm confident that once again this year our employees will set an example for other ministries to follow."

"The need for the services that United Way supports is greater than ever, and chances are that every employee knows someone who has benefited from a United Way-funded agency."

September 11th marks the kick-off of the Metro Toronto campaign — the biggest in the province — with the annual walkathon, followed by many other fundraising efforts.

One event that has become a year-round practice in some workplaces is Casual Fridays, in which employees donate \$1 toward the United Way contribution in exchange for the privilege of dressing down. This year, Casual Day will be a Canada-wide event on Friday, Nov. 18, when it's hoped all workplaces will dress casually

to benefit the United Way.

Another new event is Helping Hands Day on Sept. 29. On that day, hundreds of employees will be spending the day volunteering for a United Way agency, performing such tasks as painting a senior's residence, reading stories to children at a community centre or delivering meals to homebound residents. It's a chance for the volunteers to see how their United Way dollars are spent and, it's hoped, to share the experience with their co-workers.

If you'll be in Toronto during the campaign, several entertainment venues are being planned to benefit the United Way. A portion of the proceeds from all tickets sold for September performances of Phantom of the Opera at the Pantages Theatre will benefit the United Way (call TicketMaster, 416-872-2222).

On Nov. 19, the Vanier Cup will be held at the SkyDome. This year's university football championship game marks its 30th anniversary, and \$1 from each ticket sold benefits United Way (TicketMaster at 416-872-5000).

And at the end of October, people will be huffing and puffing to the top of the CN Tower to support the United Way. The public climb is Oct. 29; a "team challenge" event takes place Oct. 30. Call Shannon Robertson at 416-777-2001, ext. 320.

More information about the ministry campaign will follow shortly.

Consumers and advocates to advise minister

Minister Tony Silipo will be establishing a new Social Assistance Advisory Committee later this fall. The deadline for applications was Sept. 7 and the new committee is expected to be up and running by October.

The new 10-member committee will be

composed of consumers and advocates with expertise in the area of social assistance and will make recommendations directly to the minister. A minimum of six members will be former or current consumers of social assistance, and membership will be in keeping with the government's employment

equity guidelines. The group will have input into all major policy development initiatives as they relate to social assistance.

Duties will include regular meetings of the committee, responding in writing to issues referred to the committee by the minister or ministry, and providing quarterly

reports as well as a public annual report.

The ministry liaison person for the new committee will be Cheryl Gorman at the Social Assistance Programs Branch (tel. 416-325-5304).

ESR: Where we've been, where we're going

By the Employment Systems Review Project Team

As the Employment Systems Review (ESR) steps into its final phases, we would like to recap the events of the past, present and future.

The ESR Task Force was established in June 1993 to review the ministry's employment systems, identify barriers to equitable employment and make recommendations for the removal of these barriers.

Employment systems include processes such as recruitment, developmental opportunities, performance management, promotions and

other aspects of working in MCSS.

To date, our communication strategy has included update and progress reports in every *Dialogue* issue since March; questions sent from and replies received at our DEC account, called ESR_PROJECT (more than 450 letters received to date); and approximately 100 presentations to staff across the ministry.

Highlights from the workforce data

Continued on page 2

Summertime memories of Grippen Lake Camp

By Susan Best

What is it that most of us want out of a summer vacation? Pleasant surroundings, great weather, good food and a more relaxed pace to life. Well, except for a firm commitment on the weather, that's exactly what guests at Grippen Lake Camp can expect during their stay.

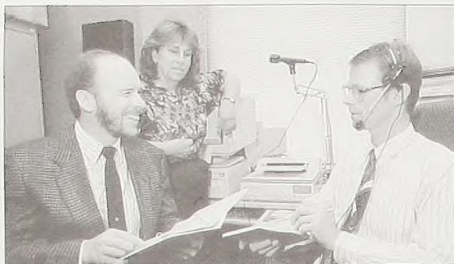
Situated deep in the heart of Eastern Ontario, Rideau Regional Centre's summer camp is located on 30 acres just outside of Lyndhurst on the shores of Grippen Lake. The camp was originally established by the



Steven Best photo

Cathy Blakely, Leah Kuno and Bobby Burns from Prince Edward Heights are all ready for a ride around Grippen Lake on the pontoon boat.

Continued on page 2



Glenn Babcock, Paule Balanaser and Ian Sutherland are specialists working on the EASED team's special projects. Ian is wearing a microphone device used to provide computer input by voice.

EASED into the office

When it was a pilot project, it was known as the Quick Response Team. Now that it's a permanent service, it's called the Employment Accommodation Service for Employees with Disabilities, or EASED.

That name change better reflects the services the team provides, says Laurie McEvoy, leader of EASED.

The goal of employment accommodation is to provide the employee with a disability with the same opportunity to participate in the workplace as an employee without a disability, says Laurie. "Accommodation" provides the employee with the means to do the job in a different way.

At the request of the employee (or the employee's manager), members of EASED will study the work site, the employee's job tasks and method of work, then analyze these elements in relation to the disability and the employee's strengths to identify options for accommodating the employee. The service includes testing assistive devices, designing the workplace to meet the person's needs and ensuring the workplace is barrier-free. Costs for assistive devices and services may be reimbursed through Management Board Secretariat's Employment Accommodation Fund.

The original Quick Response Team, begun as a project in November 1991, was funded by MBS. Since its inception, the service has

completed 37 requests for accommodation, and provided advice, research and information services on 56 consultations. Currently there are 35 active customers and service has been provided in at least 15 locations, including such sites as Thunder Bay, Sarnia, Brantford and Niagara Falls. The team is the only one of its kind in the Ontario Public Service.

The "customer" of EASED is both the employee and his or her manager, who together review the options provided by EASED and decide on the accommodation needed. "We're a customer-directed resource," says Jane Byers. "You tell us what you need us to do." Laurie and Jane are the two permanent employment accommodation consultants working to provide barriers analysis and accommodation services for ministry employees who have disabilities.

In its work, the team found there are a number of system barriers in our ministry information systems, so funding has been obtained from MBS for three staff to pursue some unmet needs.

- Paule Balanaser is using her programming skills to customize a speech output system for the ministry e-mail network to benefit employees who have visual impairments.
- Glenn Babcock is investigating speech output technology for the Windows

software environment. His goal is to determine how to make the new caseworker technology information system more accessible to people with visual disabilities.

- Ian Sutherland is customizing the Dragon Dictate speech input system (an alternative to a keyboard system) for ministry e-mail; he also provides general systems support for Jane and Laurie's services.

Their three projects are funded by MBS until March 1995.

A number of devices are available to help staff with disabilities perform their jobs. For example, "devices that make the computer 'speak' the information that appears on the computer screens are called speech output systems," says Glenn. Speech input systems, on the other hand, allow a person who is unable to use a keyboard to speak into a microphone to control the computer by voice.

These commercially-designed devices are designed to work with the most popular hardware and software, such as WordPerfect. "But our ministry uses a number of different types of software and hardware, including some applications we've designed ourselves, so many of these assistive devices don't work effectively unless they're customized," says Paule.

The ultimate goal is to create accessible information systems that have no barriers — "the same way we now automatically include wheelchair ramps in new buildings," says Ian.

Notes Laurie, "Everything we learn will not only benefit employees who need these devices now, but will help us to be more effective in the future in meeting the needs of employees with disabilities."

Employees who have disabilities, and managers of employees with disabilities, can contact the EASED team (located at 2 Bloor St. W., 30th floor) by calling 416-327-4615.

...ESR

Continued from page 1

analysis were shared in the July/August issue of *Dialogue*.

The document review work group of task force members examined a number of MCSS guides, policies and manuals, as well as a sample of competition files from across the province. This phase is now complete and a final draft is being prepared.

Over the past four months we have conducted interviews with more than 200 MCSS staff from facilities, area and corporate offices, at all levels of the organization. In July, more than 70 participants attended seven focus groups which were held in Toronto. The information collected from these sources is being fed into a data base and will be analyzed.

Which takes us to our next step: the compilation of all these work group reports into a final report.

A draft report will be prepared by the ESR Task Force members and will be followed by a series of consultation meetings with a variety of groups. These could include Program Management Committee, Human Resources, OPSEU, the OPS Networks of designated group members and others.

Finally, the report will be submitted to Deputy Minister Rosemary Proctor, who is ultimately accountable for implementing the agreed-upon recommendations.

The ESR will assist in the development of realistic employment equity initiatives. The review provides information which is critical to the creation of an organization that is open and accessible. Achieving equity in employment requires change in all the ministry's employment systems, not only in Human Resources policies and practices.

...memories from Grippen Lake

Continued from page 1



Zenith Borschewski from Rideau Regional Centre cools off on the cabin porch with John Gravelle and Gary Woodall from Community Services for Hastings, Lennox and Addington (Belleville).

Brookville YMCA and purchased by MCSS in 1980. At maximum capacity, 62 guests can be accommodated and camp runs from the beginning of June to early September. The core staff is comprised of one director, one nurse, five lifeguards, one cook and two summer students.

Over the course of this summer, about 70 per cent of Grippen Lake Camp's guests were residents from Rideau Regional Centre. The remaining 30 per cent were from Prince Edward Heights in Picton, Oranville in Kingston and various group homes attached to a variety of community agencies in Eastern Ontario.

For four weeks Grippen Lake was also home to four international volunteers from Japan, Germany, Czechoslovakia and

Poland. This is not the first year that Rideau has welcomed people from the Volunteers Abroad program, and it has always proved to be a mutually-beneficial experience for all involved.

The primary aim of Grippen Lake Camp is to provide a relaxing vacation experience for people with developmental disabilities. All of the on-site facilities have been modified to make them accessible to guests with physical disabilities.

For the residents of Rideau Regional Centre and other facilities, Grippen Lake Camp is certainly THE place to be during the summer months.

Susan Best is the communications co-ordinator at Rideau Regional Centre in Smiths Falls.

The what and why of WASS

In the July/August issue of *Dialogue*, we showed you the organization chart for Workplace Accommodation and Safety Services, or WASS.

This new unit brings together four functions under one roof: Employment Accommodation Services for Employees with Disabilities (formerly the Quick Response Team: see accompanying story), Facilities Management, Facilities Management/Special Projects, and Occupational Health and Safety. These are all the responsibility of Senior Manager Kathy Macpherson.

Kathy says the unit was created after Assistant Deputy Minister of Corporate Services Lynn MacDonald recognized the interrelationships among the sections. By linking them organizationally, the sections are better able to meet present and future client needs.

The unit's mandate is to provide advice, direction and technical expertise toward a healthy, safe and appropriate work environment for all staff, and to

minimize — if not prevent — occupational illnesses and injuries.

Several factors came into play in the decision to combine the four functions, notes Kathy. There is the changing nature of our work which requires increasing use of technology, there's also changes in the way we work, such as self-managing teams; the changing demographics of our workforce (we're getting older); and increased diversity in our workplaces, which includes the need to better accommodate staff who have disabilities.

Some of the areas the WASS unit is working on include:

- developing an approach to respond to a general increase in repetitive strain injuries;
- positively working with MBS to ensure barrier-free and ergonomically-correct workplace design; and
- joint problem-solving on specific problems with air quality and staff security.

Adoption Disclosure staff get the job done



The Adoption Disclosure Register review team: Lucy Vanasse, Peg Lancelotte, Mike Morley, Ian Mitchell and Liz Mackenzie.

Part of a continuing series about better business practices.

By Julia Naczynski

Adoption Disclosure staff are doing a commendable job with the resources they have on hand even though the demand for services continues to grow.

This was one of the conclusions of a three-month interdivisional review of business practices at the ministry's Adoption Disclosure Register records section.

The review team, with representation from the Program Management and Corporate Services divisions, was led by project manager Mike Morley, whose task was to conduct a better business practices review of the ADR.

One of the purposes of the review was to see if the technology known as "document imaging" might be one way to speed up the flow of work. (See accompanying story.)

"Although imaging was not the answer in this case," says Mike, "we did find significant areas for improvement and streamlining of the existing technology and business processes. I think this is an important message for other offices looking for new solutions."

The review team decided to focus on better business practices and to evaluate other technology options.

The review found that in the past two years, staff were processing proportionally more applications than when the number of employees was at an all-time high. "Staff should be applauded for improving their productivity even as the number of staff fell,"

notes Mike. "They are an impressive team."

Key recommendations of the review revolved around updating existing technology in the ADR and consolidating database functions that had previously been managed on an ad hoc basis.

Other recommendations made in the review included: doing more counselling by mail; developing a technology plan to replace outdated and aging equipment with IBM-compatible personal computer and software; better use of voice mail reception; and more direct contact with the Registrar General and Ministry of Transportation in order to make use of their records.

Mike notes that the ADR staff were themselves responsible for most of the recommendations through feedback to the review team. "A lot of our work simply involved stimulating the creative process and realizing the potential that already existed in the ADR."

Peg Lancelotte, administrative supervisor at Adoptions and Operational Services, says the review helped the ADR staff pull together a number of proposals and ideas and put them into a new perspective. "It showed us how we can put our resources where there is good pay-back," she says. The final report will be "a reference point for our future projects and initiatives." Best of all was the "renewing of expertise" and consultation with ADR staff. "They could see themselves and their ideas in the report."

She typed her way to the top — again

Maureen Tucker has won the Great Canadian Two-Finger Typing Challenge for the second year in a row.

Maureen, a clerk with Vocational Rehabilitation Services in London, successfully defended her title and beat out 89 other two-finger typists in the Aug. 11 event. Her speed was 78.9 words per minute, using solely her middle fingers. She bettered her title-winning speed of last year thanks to a no-error performance.

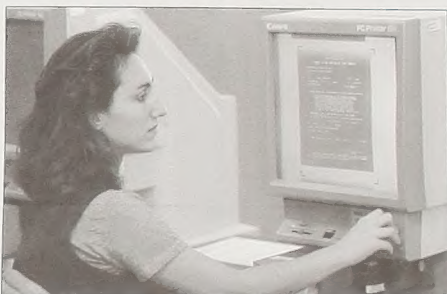
Maureen's fellow employees in London made contributions to the Sunshine Fund, a charity that fulfills the wishes of terminally-ill children. Their pledges were based on her typing speed. Nearly \$300 was raised for the charity, and Maureen won a gift certificate from a stationery store.

The three runners-up reportedly won free typing lessons.

Maureen says she was "very relieved" to have won the two-finger title again, as her colleagues in the London Area Office were gearing up for the event for weeks in advance. "You'd have thought I won the Nobel Prize for chemistry again!" she says of her co-workers' enthusiasm.

Maureen adds that there is no North American tour in the works, and that the organizers are checking with the Guinness Book of World Records to see if the competition has set a precedent. The event was sponsored by the London Business Times magazine, Galleria London (a downtown shopping mall) and the London Board of Education.

The technology of document imaging



Researcher Rosemary Mirigliani searches through documents that are viewed on a microfilm reader. Converting the Adoption Disclosure Register's document retrieval system to a higher-tech method would not make a significant difference to the search process, a better business practices review has shown.

Document imaging is a way of putting paper documents onto a computer disk as pictures that can be retrieved electronically. This technology was of much interest to ADR staff because they spend a great deal of time searching through official documents and records.

Some of these records date back to the turn of the century (often they're hand-written), and most are already on microfilm. These include adoption orders, registrations of adoption placements, Crown Ward information and other identification to match adopted adults to birth relatives on request.

ADR staff had long pondered the usefulness of document imaging as one way of doing record searches more efficiently. This question became even more important in 1987, when legislation governing adoption disclosure was relaxed and demand for services grew. Between 1989 and 1991, the staff complement was doubled in order to temporarily deal with the increase in demand, but in 1992 staff had to be reduced even though demand was still high.

Some felt that document imaging of the historical information would help staff get the work done faster. Accordingly, review leader Mike Morley and a team of staff—including Liz Mackenzie, Ian Mitchell and Lucy Vanasse, with Peg Lancelotte from

Adoptions and Operational Services as lead client group representative—began investigating the feasibility of document imaging.

Besides studying the ADR's current updatable microfiche system, the project team interviewed all ADR staff to get their input, and visited other government operations to see how document imaging works for them.

The team found that the labour cost of converting its active file images from microfiche would be as much as \$500,000. Converting other historical records could cost up to \$3 million and would not necessarily improve access times.

"The ADR has some very specific business needs and due to the volume and nature of the historical files, we felt the benefits of imaging would not outweigh the costs," says Mike.

Nevertheless, the ADR review will help the ministry understand the broader costs and benefits of imaging and how we can use it to advantage elsewhere. As part of another project, Mike has worked with Malcolm Marshall of ISB to generate a specific list of criteria for potential imaging solutions. "I think it is a fact that imaging is here to stay," says Mike. "The question, then, is how to get the most out of it by making the smartest possible investments."

Technology Tips

From Information Systems Branch

The Ontario government's Management Board Secretariat provides an audio teleconferencing service. This service, which allows people to hold a "meeting" via telephone long-distance lines, has been offered for over 10 years and is becoming increasingly popular.

Presently MBS is upgrading the audio teleconferencing service to state-of-the-art technology, with significantly more capacity,

as they anticipate much higher requirements for audio teleconferencing usage in the future due to recent Ontario government travelling restrictions.

The equipment is configured for meet-me (MM) and operator-assist (OA) audio teleconferences. Meet-me conferences are when the participants personally dial in and are connected to the teleconference "bridge." Most of the time, a meet-me (MM) arrangement should be used.

Operator-assist conferences are when the teleconference operators call the participants at a pre-determined telephone number and connect them directly into the conference. Operator-assist (OA) calls are processed only under specific and difficult situations.

Hold your meeting without leaving your office: audio teleconferencing

The bridge also has the ability to tape-record meetings. The request for cassette tape-recording service must be made when you book your teleconference; also, the chairperson must inform all participants that the meeting will be taped.

Bookings and taped conferences are on a first-come, first-served basis.

Meet-me (MM) teleconference costs \$5 per line per half-hour; operator-assist (OA) teleconference is \$5 per half-hour plus a \$5 flat fee per line.

Long-distance charges will apply if Bell lines are used in operator-assisted and collect calls for audio teleconferencing.

Taping of teleconferences costs \$5 per 90-minute cassette tape. The tapes will be provided by the Queen's Park

teleconferencing services.

If you need to cancel a teleconference, you need to notify the operator at least 24 hours before the scheduled conference time. Otherwise, the audio teleconference charges will be applied.

To arrange the service, call the Queen's Park teleconference operator at 416-325-3400 after confirming all participants' names, locations, phone numbers, and meeting date and time. The teleconference service is available during regular business hours (8 a.m. to 6 p.m.). Service at other times can be specially arranged.

For further information on this service, call Ann Xavi (MBS) at 416-325-1092.

In Memoriam



Miki MacMillan in Moosonee, 1980.

Maureen (Miki) MacMillan

Miki MacMillan passed away quietly at her North Bay home among family and friends on July 18, 1994. She was the probation supervisor in the North Bay District Office.

Miki had been with the ministry since 1976 and her career in young offender services was both extensive and influential. She worked in Hamilton, Moosonee, Mississauga and for the former North Regional Office.

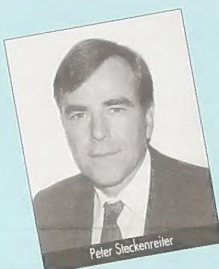
Miki was well-known for her thoroughness and an irreverent sense of humour, as well as her passion for probation services. She was a mentor to many people in the ministry. She dispensed with formalities whenever possible and her final wish was that there be no funeral or flowers.

She is survived by her husband and best friend, Dr. Alan G. Hart, her mother Jean MacMillan, her sister Debbie and brothers Jim and John. She requested that donations be made to the Terry McKerrow CAT Scan Operation Fund. The address is: c/o P.O. Box 22035, North Bay, Ont. P1B 9P5.

Peter Steckenreiter has been permanently appointed to the position of London Area Office Manager. He has been acting in this position since October 1993. Peter began with the ministry in 1983 as a program supervisor in the London Area Office. He then moved to the Southwest Regional Office (London), where he was the co-ordinator of planning and support services, regional manager of information systems and regional manager of finance and administration.

Jocelyne Samson-Gauthier is the ministry's new Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Co-ordinator. Jocelyne joins us from Management Board Secretariat. Besides the ability to provide service in both French and English, Jocelyne brings to us FIPPA expertise and extensive experience leading complex projects in both the private and public sector. With the assistance of others in the branch and ministry, Jocelyne will be working on re-engineering the FIPPA

People and Places



process. Jocelyne can be reached via e-mail at SAMSON.J or at telephone number 416-730-6497, and is looking forward to working with you.

Nuzhat Jafri has left the ministry's Employment Equity Office to join the Employment Equity Commission as director of policy and planning. Joan Becks is the acting manager for the office.

Please note that there is a new address to put in your telephone book. The Vocational Rehabilitation Services office and Family Benefits office 5421 that were located at 3501 Dufferin Street in Downsview have moved. As of Aug. 15, the new address become 1870 Wilson Avenue, North York, ON M9M 1A5. The general inquiry number for this office is 416-325-5900. This FBA office will continue to service the same area defined by the postal codes that begin with M3K, M3L, M3M, M3N, M6C, M6E, M6L, M6M, M6N, M9L, M9M and M9N.

Upcoming conference

Ongwanada Resource Centre in Kingston will hold its annual conference on developmental disabilities on Nov. 2.

The theme of this year's day-long event "The Effects of Aging on Clients and Caregivers." Other sessions include topics such as: the increased risks of the caregiving profession; the Diogenes Syndrome; aging and the risks of falls; drugs and the aging individual with developmental disabilities; theory of aging as it relates to people with developmental disabilities; and "I've been injured, and I have to work." the caregivers' perspective.

For more information call 613-548-4417 or fax 613-548-8135.

dialogue

Ontario Community and Social Services

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